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ABSTRACT

An explanation of the Continuing Education Unit (CEU) is offered in this paper. At Jefferson College in Missouri, the CEU is an evaluative unit used in awarding a Continuing Education Diploma. The CEU is defined as ten contact hours of participation in an organized continuing education experience under responsible leadership, capable direction and qualified instruction. It enables the adult learner to receive recognition for a broad range of self-fulfilling learning experiences. At the same time it provides the institution with a vehicle for measuring and recording these experiences. (Author/SW)

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ACCREDITING THE NEW CLIENTELE FOR POST-SECONDARY EDUCATION

BY

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Accrediting The New Clientele For Post-Secondary Education

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In reviewing recent developments in the nation's community colleges it sometimes seems that the overall expansion and resultant impact of those institutions is paralled only by the subsequent documentation of that growth in recent literature. The current stature of the community colleges in terms of institutional numbers and the proportionate share of the population involved in those educational programs, has been eloquently and sometimes repetitously described.

Nevertheless, scholars in higher education have built a strongly convincing case that one area of that growth will continue into the foreseeable future and probably beyond. Reference here is to the already large and steadily growing numbers of people of all ages turning and returning to community colleges for available learning experiences which are not associated with degree or certificate programs. The Carnegie Commission report, Open Door Colleges, found that "approximately half of the students in two year colleges are adults, ranging from 22 to 70 years" in age.

The contention here is that the need is apparent for a systematic accounting procedure that wi'l effectively deal with fundamental aspects of recognition for "non-credit" learning experiences.

The Continuing Education Unit (CEU)

The CEU is gaining recognition as a standard unit of measur-

ment in continuing education. The states of Georgia, Virginia, North Carolina and the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools are finding a place in post-secondary education for the CEU. Here at Jefferson College, a member of the statewide system community colleges in Missouri, the CEU is the evaluative unit used in awarding a Continuing Education Diploma.

The CEU is defined as ten contact hours of participation in an organized continuing education experience under responsible leadership, capable direction and qualified instruction. According to the Commission On Colleges Southern Association of Colleges and Schools (1973) the following are the criteria for awarding the CEU:

1. The non-credit activity is planned in response to an assessment of educational need for a specific target population.
2. There is a statement of objectives and rationale.
3. Content is selected and is organized in a sequential manner.
4. There is evidence of pre-planning which a representative of the target group to be served, the faculty area having content expertise, and continuing education personnel.
5. The activity is of an instructional nature and is sponsored or approved by an academic or administrative unit of the institution best qualified to affect the quality of the program content and to approve the resource personnel utilized.
6. There is a provision for registration for individual participants and to provide data for institutional reporting.
7. Appropriate evaluation procedures are utilized and criteria are established for awarding CEU's to individual students prior to the beginning of the activity. This may include the evaluation of student performance, instructional procedures, and course effectiveness.

As such it has easy application to adult continuing education programs. It enables the adult learner to receive recognition for a broad range of self-fulling learning experiences. At the same time it provides

the institution with a vehicle for measuring and recording these experiences.

The CEU is flexible over limited periods of time. It is suited to short courses, conferences, seminars, correspondence study, and can also be granted for valid life experiences. It is readily adaptable and easily computed for all formats and durations of educational programming wherever contact hours can be determined. For example, partial units may be recorded by taking advantage of the decimal nature of the system of measurement. As an illustration, fourteen contact hours of participation in a class can be recorded as 1.4 CEU's, while four hours would be recorded as 0.4 CEU.

The CEU can be used for evaluation, accumulation, and recognition of participation in programs which seldom in the past have been recorded in a systematic way or with any sense of permanence, significance or transferability. One can only assume that the changing societal value systems, personal needs and attitudes responsible for the current national participation in life-long educational pursuits will eventually demand recognition of those efforts. It also follows that once that demand is answered by the institutions the matter of transferability will need to be considered.

The fact is that the Continuing Education Unit (CEU) is suited to the policies of professional societies, industry, licensing boards, community colleges, and other agencies engaged in varied transferable programs for personal and career oriented development.

The College's Response

Gleazer (1973) recently pointed to the need for the community college to become community based because "consumers are demanding that the structures and processes of education be arranged upon the assumption that persons of any age are to be served." In the community the explosion of technology has severely tested the capability of most institutions to keep individuals updated. Consumers are shifting emphasis more and more to human services that deliver broad life enrichments. Hence, the educational institution must choose between responding to the community or engaging in the present depression mentality with it's short-term, limited perspective. In anxious times like these, institutions too often adopt stop-gap measures in lieu of seeking lasting solutions to problems. One can find those institutions busily juggling the mechanics of education and renaming old processes while attemption to pour new wine into old bottles in the name of "innovation" and novelty.

The CEU is a fresh approach to the consumer demand that education be open to persons of all ages under less rigid conditions. The Carnegie Commission Reports (1968, 1970, 1971) on Higher Education and the Newman Committee Report (1971) stress the need for greater flexibility, accessibility, and a broader range of programs.

The CEU alleviates the fact that too little recognition is given continuing education participants. It establishes meaningful check points and career goals comparable to established degrees and professional licenses. Perhaps, most importantly, it represents an honest attempt to deal with accrediting the community's desire for

lifelong learning, whether at home, at work, or in the community center. Certainly any such effort is most compatible with the broad mission the community colleges have set for themselves.

Conclusion

In 1974, faced with continually shifting curricular demands, probably dwindling enrollments and revenues, many institutional decision makers may contemplate withdrawal from once aggressive policy making efforts. There seems to be a natural tendency to rely on programs and formats which were current in less troubled times. However, such thinking may only contribute to any real or imagined overall declining state of affairs.

Perhaps as educators we have for too long had little regard for various types of programs, teachers, and a number of valid learning experiences because they fit neither our existing academic models nor our standards. Today, there are a number of industries, professions and individual students who are turning away from formal education for their educational needs. They simply do not feel a need for what we offer in the way we prefer to offer it with the demands we make upon them.

The CEU is not a give-away. It has very definitive standards and pre-requisites. It also seems better suited to serve the needs of the new clientele which formal education has often slighted under the auspices of "non-credit".

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